How Teamsters Took the UPS Strike Overseas

Labor won't win many key bargaining and organizing struggles unless it develops new international strategies.

By John Russo and Andy Banks

Chances are that the L.L. Bean Polartec fleece shirt you ordered as a holiday gift arrived via FedEx right on time since, in late November, the FedEx pilots' union abandoned its threatened walkout, which would have paralyzed the company. The union's unilateral capitulation came after the package-delivery firm threatened to contract out many of its international flights operated by the unionized pilots.

This defeat for labor by a viciously anti-union employer stands in stark contrast to the victory won at another package-delivery firm, United Parcel Service, where a stronger union developed international support among foreign workers whose backing was crucial.

The success of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' (IBT) strike against UPS in the summer of 1997 teaches important lessons, but perhaps the least explored to date have been the international strategies and tactics the union employed to strengthen its bargaining position against a corporation with major worldwide operations. Given its smaller size and resources, some believe that the FedEx pilots' union could not have duplicated the international campaign that helped the Teamsters win at UPS, but the differing outcomes make clear that no union

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dealing with a global corporation can afford not to develop its own international strategy.

The increasing internationalization of capital and corporate globalization has been largely unimpeded by counterbalancing institutions such as labor unions and the nation-state. The result is what in organizational theory is termed "structural lag." That is, an organizational and structural gap develops between more rapidly evolving institutions and those institutions with which they must interact. In the case of global corporations, the structural lag is exacerbated by their ability to use globalization (real or imagined) itself to further weaken unions and the nation-state in their home country.

As a consequence, both national and international labor organizations are beginning to critically examine current trade union structures and determine how they can be reorganized structurally, strategically, and tactically in order to meet the challenges of globalization.

For example, the international trade secretariats (ITS) are reevaluating their traditional policy/diplomacy roles and are attempting to create new structures to assist affiliated unions in their industries to negotiate with transnational corporations. The emerging ITS structures include new or revamped industry or company councils that help affiliates, and even nonaffiliate unions, to initiate campaigns to extend union recognition and representation, establish basic labor standards in unorganized sectors, and assist bargaining activities in already-unionized segments of an industry or corporation.

The 1997 UPS strike by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters was greatly assisted by such an international strategy, developed jointly with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF). The ITF helped its affiliates organize a World Council of UPS Trade Unions, whose international activities threatened UPS operations in competitive overseas markets.

Because UPS dominated the American market and could endure, with some confidence, a long strike, the World Council's activities provided the Teamsters important economic leverage in bargaining with UPS and hastened the strike settlement.

United Parcel Service is the world's largest package distribution company, with worldwide operations that include 340,000 employees, 500 aircraft, and 2,400 facilities in more than 200 countries, delivering 3.1 billion parcels or documents annually. Every day, UPS delivers 12 million parcels and documents and 1.6 million air documents (next-day and two-day air deliveries), and services 1.46 million shippers who receive automatic daily pickup service. Technologically, UPS has been at the forefront in developing advanced distribution systems and global telecommunication networks.

UPS was founded in 1907 and, for the past half century, has largely dominated the small-package-delivery market in the United States. In 1976, UPS began its European operations in West Germany and gradually expanded throughout Europe in the 1980s. Today, UPS has major operations in sixteen European countries and has service partners/agents in sixteen other European countries.

On the labor side, the Teamsters union is one of the largest in the United States with 1.4 million members and more than 400,000 retirees. The IBT is a diversified union representing workers in such industries as transportation, warehouse, construction, health care, retail, airlines, and entertainment. Historically, its strength has been in the transportation and warehouse industries, where, in recent years, membership has declined as a result of deregulation, subcontracting, and

technological innovation. In 1997, slightly more than 15 percent of the Teamster membership was employed by one company: United Parcel Service.

Organized in 1896, the International Transport Workers Federation is one of the oldest international trade secretariats. It represents 5 million members in some 500 unions in 130 different countries. While its traditional strength has been in Western Europe, the ITF has seen large increases in membership in the North American and the Asian-Pacific regions. The ITF is structurally organized into eight industrial sectors: railway, road transport, inland navigation, seafarers, dock workers, fishing workers, civil aviation, and tourism services. Road transport is one of those eight major sections of the ITF, but its membership in Western Europe has been adversely affected by expansion of global corporations such as UPS and FedEx.

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In June 1996, a Teamsters delegation requested a special informal meeting for ITF affiliates to discuss problems they were experiencing with UPS. The unions from seven countries reviewed their recent organizing and bargaining experience and examined how UPS was functioning internationally. The ITF decided it was necessary to have an official meeting six months later to include all unions that had an ongoing relationship with UPS as well as those that intended to organize nonunion UPS workers.

Held in London in February 1997, the meeting included union officials and UPS shop stewards from ITF-affiliated unions representing UPS workers in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Canada, Germany, and the United States, as well as unions from Brazil and Ireland that were targeting UPS for future organizing. The unions in the latter group were both affiliated with Postal, Telephone and Telegraph International (PTTI)—an international trade union secretariat that represents postal and telephone unions.

The unions shared highly detailed information about UPS activities. Of particular concern were the company's business strategies, labor practices, and inattentiveness to health and safety issues. Participants focused on the problems of part-time work, the high number of workplace injuries associated with lifting, the expansion of subcontracting, and the increasing hostility of UPS toward union representatives. Attendees decided to formalize their relationship by establishing an ITF World Council of UPS Trade Unions.

They asked the ITF to help set up an information network and support structure for the upcoming negotiations between the Teamsters and UPS. This was an obvious priority because the IBT already represented two-thirds of UPS workers worldwide and the outcome of UPS–IBT negotiations was crucial to future collective agreements for non-U.S. participants.

In support of the negotiations, the World Council also sought help from its parent body to organize and coordinate an ITF World

Action Day at UPS in the spring and to convene a World Council meeting in Washington, DC, in June 1997. The date was chosen to coincide with the final stages of the UPS–IBT negotiations. Finally, the ITF was directed to circulate among its member unions a draft "Global Corporate Code of Conduct and Social Responsibility" that would acknowledge, among other things, the fundamental labor rights of UPS workers to organize and bargain collectively around the world.

The establishment of the ITF World Council—highly publicized throughout Europe—and the plan for a UPS World Action Day threatened the firm's globalization strategy and, especially, its recent $1 billion direct investment in European operations. So concerned was UPS that, after reviewing press reports on the meeting, its general manager for United Kingdom operations telephoned David Cockroft, the ITF general secretary, to inquire whether the UPS World Action Day meant there would be a one-day worldwide strike.

After the February meeting, the ITF facilitated the exchange of information and people to build support. The Communication Workers Union (CWU), an Irish union organizing UPS, sent its organizing director, Chris Hudson, to the United States to learn more about strategies being used by the American unions and to help build labor solidarity with IBT local unions that represented UPS workers. In Ireland, the CWU represents workers in the post office–owned package company—the country's largest—which was experiencing increased competition from firms such as UPS and FedEx that paid inferior wages and benefits. Hudson visited local unions throughout the eastern United States, spending nearly a week at some locals talking to Teamsters members and leaders. At every opportunity, Hudson told his hosts that he did not represent any UPS employees, but saw the ITF World Council as a way to assist his own union's organizing of the small-parcel industry.

In Italy, another opportunity developed to build international solidarity. When UPS fired an Italian shop steward for union activity, the ITF helped organize a worldwide fax and letter-writing campaign from member unions of the ITF World Council. Such a showing of international solidarity over the disciplining of a shop steward was an indication to UPS of the Council's potential.

Throughout the spring of 1997, the ITF prepared for World Action Day, printing and translating leaflets and posters into eight languages, and sponsoring shop steward and membership meetings to explain the importance of showing solidarity on that day.

On May 22, 1997, the Council organized more than 150 job actions and demonstrations at UPS facilities worldwide as part of the action day. UPS union shop stewards in eleven countries handed out information sheets to UPS workers and encouraged them to wear stickers saying "Around the World, United for Good Jobs at UPS: International Day of Trade Union Action."

Demonstrations were held in most countries at UPS work sites. In both Italy and Spain, these escalated into short work stoppages of less than half a day. The Council's European affiliates sent delegations of shop stewards and activists to Brussels, where they were joined by Teamsters in a demonstration at the UPS European headquarters.

In Dublin, an IBT representative addressed UPS drivers and clerical workers who had joined the CWU. After his return from the United States, Chris Hudson and the CWU had organized 40 percent of the UPS drivers in Ireland. Hearing from a spokesperson from the union that represented 185,000 UPS

workers in the United States provided another boost for CWU organizing efforts in Ireland.

The activities of World Action Day soon were followed by the second meeting of the ITF World Council on June 25–26 in Washington, DC—a session that coincided with the IBT–UPS labor negotiations, which by then had bogged down over the issues of subcontracting, the expansion of part-time work, and safety and health problems.

The IBT asked Council members to come a day early and to join its negotiators at the bargaining table with UPS. In a show of solidarity, IBT negotiators introduced each of their "international guests" to management negotiators. After the World Action Day protests, the implied threat was unmistakable. Furthermore, the visiting trade unionists, many of whom were UPS shop stewards, had a firsthand opportunity to examine UPS's bargaining behavior and strategies.

The focus of the second meeting of the Council was to develop an institutional structure and to begin to draft the global code of conduct for the international small-package industry. Both the Teamsters and ITF believed that it was time to formalize the activities of the Council, which had been functioning as a loosely knit coalition.

Earlier, in 1995–96, the Teamsters had some limited success in building a world trade union council with unions in another global company: the Dutch grocery retailer Royal Ahold.

In the Ahold case, the IBT had organized an international labor/environmental/religious coalition. It also secured the assistance of the Federation of Commercial, Technical, and Professional Employees (FIET), an international trade union secretariat representing commercial workers. FIET helped construct a World Council of Ahold Unions to press for a basic code of conduct for Ahold and its subsidiaries. But when Ahold resisted, FIET and the Ahold World Council were reluctant to lead a worldwide strategic campaign.

Based on the Ahold/FIET experience, the IBT was apprehensive about this crucial phase of international trade union structure building—the institutionalization of trade union coalitions.

Consequently, the Teamsters very specifically wanted the ITF World Council to have an impact on future organizing and bargaining (in the United States and overseas) through the development of stronger bonds between the IBT and transportation unions in strategically important countries. The Teamsters also wanted to find consensus on language for the code of conduct that could lead to the development of a recognition agreement between UPS and the ITF World Council (and eventually the other three international small-package integrator companies: DHL, FedEx, and TNT).

The IBT also wanted to create an action plan for the Council focused on strengthening its structure through better communication strategies and through the education of UPS shop stewards and union members worldwide.

To accomplish these objectives, the ITF World Council made the following recommendations to its affiliated organizations:

1. Each affiliated union would write a letter to UPS management in its home country and request that UPS meet with the ITF for the purpose of discussing recognition of the World Council. Such meetings would not take place until the fall of 1997, after the conclusion of IBT negotiations.
2. Each affiliated union pledged to give full support to the Teamsters and the Inde-

pendent Pilots Association (IPA)—the UPS pilots' union—in their upcoming negotiations with UPS. The Council would organize international solidarity in the event of a strike by either U.S. union. At the Council meeting, the IPA was able to set up meetings between pilots on layover in other countries and the shop stewards of the various UPS unions overseas. The ITF was instructed to send a letter to UPS management indicating global support for the pilots.

3. The Council would develop an action program in support of an international dialogue with UPS on questions such as job security, part-time employment, and subcontracting.
4. One UPS "Internet steward" who could read and write in English would be identified in each country. Each steward would draft and e-mail a monthly country report of no more than one page to the other Internet stewards. Moreover, stewards would provide their national unions (in some countries there are multiple unions at UPS) with copies of material received each month from the other countries for possible distribution. In this fashion the various monthly reports would be translated from English into the native tongues. Both the national union hierarchies and the UPS shop stewards would know, in good detail and in rapid time, the news of relevant events around the world. And, of course, this same structure could be used in the future as a mobilization structure for worldwide actions.
5. A one-page monthly or bimonthly international UPS *Flash Bulletin* was to be published in English, based on incoming reports from UPS representatives in each country with Council membership. IBT agreed to take the lead.
6. Future consideration would be given to IBT and Dutch labor federation proposals to expand the Council to the rest of the international small-package industry, focusing on the four so-called small-package integrators: UPS, DHL, FedEx, and TNT. This would mean developing an international industry trade union council.
7. A commitment was made to strengthen the Council's membership in Asia, Africa, and Latin America by recruiting unions that represent UPS's workers and its subcontractors in developing nations. The Council also would encourage unions to organize UPS in strategically crucial countries where it has been a nonunion employer, such as Ireland, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan.
8. The Council would pursue UPS wherever it relocates from unionized activities, such as the move from "call centers" in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France to nonunion facilities in Ireland. The objective was to demonstrate to UPS that there is no safe haven from trade unions. Special plans were made by the European unions to assist the CWU's efforts to organize foreign nationals employed at the call center in Ireland. UPS had closed unionized call centers throughout Western Europe and opened a huge consolidated multilingual call center near Dublin linked to the various countries by toll-free numbers and satellite technology. This caused some layoffs, and the various European unions were eager to send a message to management that UPS could not run away from its obligation to workers. The call center in Ireland was staffed primarily by young female immigrants to Ireland who were native speakers of the various European languages. At the Council meeting, the CWU of Ireland made plans with the other unions to send over young female shop stewards from UPS to assist in CWU's efforts to organize the call center.

9. The Council debated and adopted for recommendation to their home unions a draft version of the code of conduct. The code guaranteed basic human and trade union rights for workers in the industry, including collective bargaining rights and the right to organize without interference from the employer. It gave the ITF the responsibility for monitoring the code. The code also outlined many threshold standards on issues such as health and safety, subcontracting, and part-time work.

This effort was perhaps the most serious attempt in recent years by an international trade union secretariat to develop a flexible international corporate council structure and strategy that respected international labor rights while appreciating the diversity of global industrial relations. Within a month, the new ITF World Council would get its first test.

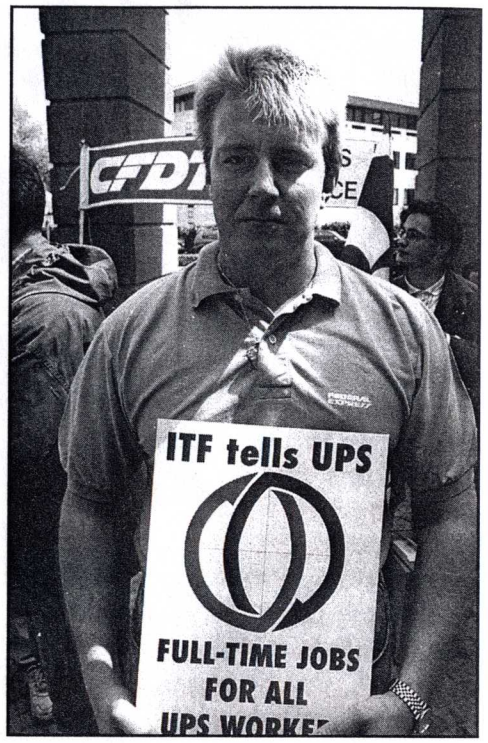
The reasons most often cited for the success of the Teamsters strike at UPS in 1997 are the strategic support of the 2,000-member pilots union, the contract campaign initiated by the Teamster staff, the member-organizing program at the local level, and the development of a successful public relations campaign in the United States (see *WorkingUSA,* September–October 1997) that captured the underlying public discontent over the expansion of part-time employment and subcontracting by corporations.

But rarely mentioned and even less well understood is how the actions of the ITF World Council contributed to the resolution of the UPS strike. In fact, Teamster negotiators have indicated that the actions of the Council during the dispute were pivotal in the resolution of the fifteen-day UPS strike.

How did the IBT implement the global

component of the UPS contract campaign? What international pressures were placed on UPS management to settle the strike? How did the infant structures of the ITF World Council function during the strike?

The Teamsters' international corporate campaign focused on UPS's European operations. Controlling almost 80 percent of the small-package market in the United States, UPS enjoyed a near-monopoly status in the American market. But in Europe, UPS faced real competition from national postal services and the three largest package integrators—DHL, TNT, and FedEx. Because any business lost during the strike could result in a permanent loss of market share, UPS had a much greater risk in not regaining lost market share caused by a strike in Europe than it did in the United States.



To put pressure on UPS's European operations, labor advanced a three-part European strategy.

First, the Teamsters identified strategically important UPS air hubs and distribution centers. The IBT and the Council affiliates made frequent visits to these sites and, during the strike, held demonstrations, sympathy strikes, and assorted solidarity actions with affiliated unions.

Second, the IBT asked the Council to sponsor a Europe-wide meeting of strategically important unions—those that represented or were organizing UPS workers; national labor federations such as the AFL-CIO in the United States, the DGB in Germany, and the FNV in the Netherlands; international trade union secretariats such as Public Services International (PSI) and the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF); and large industrial unions such as Industriebond in the Netherlands and I.G. Metall in Germany, which represented workers at big customers of UPS, such as Daimler-Benz and Phillips.

The reason for the meeting was to have European unions make concrete and public commitments to support the strike and initiate boycotts of UPS in support of the Teamsters. This information would be provided to the media and to European customers of UPS. Critical to this strategy would be the support of the unions representing UPS's largest customers in Europe, which would be urged to prevail upon their employers to drop UPS services for the duration of the strike.

Third, the Teamsters and the Council asked European public-sector unions to appeal publicly for their members who were customs officers and labor inspectors to give greater scrutiny to UPS packages and UPS workplace-safety standards during the strike. Such public pronouncements could create apprehension among UPS customers that in part use express package services to *avoid* delays at customs. And indeed, during walkouts in which managers often are asked to perform the jobs of strikers, safety standards and customs paperwork can be expected to be among the first tasks to suffer.

The Teamster plan was simple and direct, and in support the ITF turned its London-based headquarters into a global command center for strike activities of its World Council, issuing daily updates to unions, the public, and the international business media.

A widely distributed leaflet entitled "UPS: Importing Misery from America" proved particularly useful. Translated into five languages, it explained the strike to other unions and the public. The Council also created an Internet Web site that collected and circulated information from unions worldwide about their strike-support activity.

The AFL-CIO Corporate Affairs Department deployed research staff who were able to identify strategically important UPS operations worldwide. The department also played an important role in acquiring information on major UPS European customers and counteracting public claims from the company that its European operations were unaffected by the strike.

In Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, and Germany, the Council received much-needed support from unionized workers at TNT, DHL, and FedEx. This amounted, no doubt, to enlightened self-interest. These unionists had been influenced by reports of the potential impact of UPS in their markets and the need for ITF World Council support in their own upcoming negotiations.

The IBT and the World Council efforts were successful on virtually all counts. The Council called a meeting for August 21, 1997, in Brussels to discuss a general strike in support of UPS workers. National union federations (counterparts to the AFL-CIO) in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, along with large industrial unions such as I.G. Metall and Industriebond, all made commitments to attend.

The trade secretariat for public sector unions, PSI, agreed to help the Teamsters gain support from affiliated national unions representing customs officers and labor inspectors. But perhaps the most successful element of the campaign was the mobilization of the members of affiliated unions to participate in demonstrations and job actions throughout Europe.

The ITF World Council activities ultimately depended on its ability to organize demonstrations, boycotts, and job actions in Europe. Such activities are never easy, especially where the loss of market share in the highly competitive small-package market could hurt UPS's European employees.

Despite potential economic damage, the European UPS workers and their unions actively participated in the Council's campaign—enlightened self-interest was key. European UPS workers and their unions reasoned that if the 185,000 striking Teamsters could not have an impact on the part-time, subcontracting mentality of the company, what could a few hundred, or even a few thousand, workers hope to achieve in the smaller UPS European operations?

It was in everyone's interest that the Teamsters win their strike. Here's what occurred in some selected countries:

United Kingdom. With the assistance of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) in the United Kingdom, the Council brought a delegation of Teamster strikers and UPS pilots to the main UPS distribution center at Nuneaton, England. The Nuneaton distribution center had been unionized only recently. To make matters more difficult, the Nuneaton workers were understandably reluctant to call a sympathy strike because of harsh sanctions against such actions under British law. But after meeting with the Teamster delegation, workers vowed

support by organizing sick-outs—appropriately termed the "Brown Flu." While sick-outs can be considered strikes in the United States, British law permits workers to take up to six days' sick leave without a doctor's note.

Belgium. At the UPS distribution center in Brussels, workers had long-standing grievances over health and safety issues. Of particular concern was the exposure of data operators to noxious exhaust fumes in the enclosed UPS warehouse. UPS had refused to settle this health issue for nearly six months. Consequently, the workers in Brussels decided to use the UPS strike as a pretext for their own wildcat strike, which they launched on August 7, 1997. The UPS management in Brussels was under strict orders from corporate headquarters to end all wildcat strikes immediately. When union officials demanded resolution to their health and safety concerns as a requirement to end the wildcat, local management quickly agreed. The following day, UPS shop stewards and union members from FedEx and DHL in Brussels joined the Teamster delegation in leafleting the same UPS facility.

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Germany. Germany was the most important target for the European strike activities. UPS controls 30 percent of the internal German small-package market and employs 18,000 workers. Its air hub in Cologne is the central distribution hub for all UPS packages to and from Europe.

Unionization was very weak within UPS in Germany, where the company had taken a hard line against trade unions for many years. In Mannheim, for example, 100 workers at a nearby UPS distribution center threatened to strike over the subcontracting issue. UPS management responded that, for every hour the workers struck, twenty-five jobs would be contracted out. The UPS workers struck for four hours, and UPS contracted out all the jobs.

Gewerkschaft Öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr (ÖTV), the German union representing UPS workers, saw the Teamsters strike as an opportunity to build union support within UPS. ÖTV assigned a staff member to coordinate strike support throughout Germany. Working with a Teamster/airline pilot delegation, ÖTV organized support activities in Düsseldorf, Cologne, Mannheim, Gustavsborg, and Stuttgart. Activities ranged from gaining the endorsement of the DGB, the German national trade union federation, to helping local worker councils at UPS to organize leafleting and picketing activities, to organizing free-speech protests when UPS threatened to tear down strike support posters.

During the UPS strike, German newspapers closely followed the activities of the ITF World Council. When reports that the unions in the Netherlands voted to support coordinated Europe-wide sympathy strikes reached the ÖTV in Germany, its executive board voted to endorse a strike action regardless of its legality.

Some in ÖTV, as well as other European trade unionists, believed that the UPS strike provided an opportunity to protest the expansion of American-style part-time employment and subcontracting in Europe.

The Netherlands. The ITF Council's strongest support in the Netherlands came from the transport union—the Vervoersbond, the most vocal supporter of the plan for a Europe-wide trade union meeting and mass sympathy strikes. The ITF-sponsored delegation of Teamsters and UPS pilots met with workers at UPS facilities in Amsterdam and in Eindhoven. The workers in Eindhoven voted unanimously to strike and the workers at the three other Dutch locations were in the process of voting to strike as the UPS work stoppage in the United States ended.

The Teamster/pilot delegation met with the FNV, the national trade union federation in the Netherlands. FNV promised full support of the Council's program and strongly endorsed a sympathy strike—whether it was legal or not. To back up their support, the FNV appropriated 200,000 Dutch guilders (about $100,000) in strike support funds and pledged to take a strong stand at the European trade union meeting called on August 21 to build UPS strike support in Brussels.

France. On August 18, the transport workers federation, Confédération Générale de Travailleurs (CGT) (the most militant of the three main labor federations in France), had devised a plan to shut down the UPS operations at Orly Airport near Paris two days later. Along with the transport federation of the Confédération Française Democratique de Travailleurs (CFDT), a rival federation, the CGT announced its support for the Dutch and German unions' call for Europe-wide strike action.

When the Teamsters reached a tentative agreement with UPS in Washington, DC, on August 19, the French, German, and Dutch unions called off their sympathy strikes. The Brussels meeting was also canceled.

Those directly involved in the UPS negotiations say the threat of these actions was an important factor that helped to precipitate the UPS settlement.

Our study has focused on Europe, but the ITF World Council received significant support from unions in other parts of the world. Remarkably, these support activities were not organized by the Teamsters or the ITF, but were largely spontaneous reactions to the general request for strike support. For example, in India, where UPS delivers by rail, the railroad union responded to the ITF's call for solidarity by refusing to transport UPS packages during the strike.

In the Philippines, the Civil Aviation Union organized a motorcade of 100 cars that surrounded the UPS subcontractor in Manila, preventing the transport of packages for a day.

In Spain, workers from TNT joined a UPS workers' demonstration that blocked UPS deliveries for several hours.

UPS's Atlanta headquarters were bombarded by protest messages from unions in more than fifty countries.

In reporting on the strike settlement, European newspapers said the strike signaled a turnaround for labor in the United States and Europe. For example, *Le Monde*'s headline stated: "THE TEAMSTER VICTORY AT UPS GIVES WEIGHT TO A NEW LABOR MOVEMENT IN AMERICA." Other papers said the international strike support could be seen as part of a larger reaction to the labor policies of global corporations.

Europeans have become increasingly worried over what has been called the "American Model"—a term that refers, in part, to the expansion of part-time and temporary jobs with low pay and benefits, the use of subcontracting, and the anti-union sentiments of global corporations. The UPS strike tapped the deep resentment of European

"Ten years too early"

workers and unions toward the introduction there of American labor practices.

Since the strike, the IBT has received requests from unions in Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy to send representatives to special meetings with their executive boards and to hold press conferences with their UPS union members.

There is a general sense that the once-weak UPS unions in Europe have been strengthened.

But can the ITF World Council, in the absence of a strike, build on this new confidence? There is some evidence that they can. European members seem committed to strengthening the Council and taking it in new directions. For example, there is a good deal of interest in pressuring the four international small-package integrators—DHL, UPS, TNT, and FedEx—to sign the global code of conduct that demands that corporations adhere to a set of basic labor rights and standards.

Further, given its growth within the European small-package market, there are strong indications that FedEx has been targeted for organizing by the ITF World Council some time in 1999—a development that, down the road, might help prevent the sort of setback experienced recently by the FedEx pilots' union.

Yet the future of the ITF World Council is by no means certain. A change in the internal political climate of international trade secretariats could mean a return to complacency and business as usual.

In addition, a minimum level of funding will be necessary to keep the Council functioning. The current financial difficulties at the IBT prevent the Teamsters from providing the necessary economic support that would aid Council activities.

To make matters worse, global corporations continue to evolve and grow rapidly. As a UPS manager told a Teamster field representative, the UPS strike came "ten years too early" for us. That is, UPS miscalculated and, in ten years, UPS will gain sufficient market share and global diversity to withstand national strikes.

The Council is a structural improvement in union organization that allowed the international labor movement to leverage its membership strength in dealing with a powerful global corporation, UPS. Consequently, its structural characteristics and tactical considerations hold promise for workers and unions in industries outside transportation.

These structural and tactical elements include the following:

1. The ITF World Council structure was flexible enough to meet the demands of the growing global corporation. It allowed unions around the world to focus their immediate concerns on a single company, UPS, in a manner that moved a bargaining agenda that strengthened trade unionism in the entire international small-package industry.
2. By opening participation to non-ITF affiliates and to unions *seeking* to represent UPS in their home countries, the Council departed from more rigid bureaucratic structures associated with other international trade secretariats. Further, the ITF itself provided enormous organizational and economic support in the Teamsters' case that far exceeded the typical letter-writing and sanctioning activities of other ITSs.
3. By using an organizing model of unionism that mobilized activists and rank-and-file members around militant activities such as UPS World Action Day, the ITF was able to ensure that this form of global unionism is solidly connected to the workers it represents. This model provided for inclusion of both national union representatives and shop stewards in ITF World Council meetings and relied on the talents of local activists through decentralized communication structures such as the Internet stewards.
4. The structural design of the Council was tied directly to real organizing and bargaining campaigns of its individual member unions. Consequently, its strategic initiatives were based on "real world" considerations, such as the need to organize in countries where UPS operated non-union, to develop a corporate code of conduct, and to stabilize labor conditions throughout the industry, not just at UPS.
5. Mirroring the Teamster contract campaign in the United States, the ITF committed itself organizationally to a type of social justice campaign. That is, ITF support and World Council activities were not associated with a narrow group of self-interested workers seeking higher wages—rather, they were fighting on behalf of workers and communities everywhere suffering from the socioeconomic effects of privatization, outsourcing, and contingent work.

The international labor movement has not adapted quickly enough to the evolution of global corporations.

At best, the current situation can be described as a period of experimentation in which traditional trade union structures, strategies, and tactics are under reconsideration in light of the evolution of global corporations.

Consequently, the structure and activities of the International Transport Workers Federation and its World Council must be seen as a structural adaptation necessary for dealing with global corporations.

The ITF's counterparts in other sectors, such as the metalworking and energy industries, have well-established world councils that have proved effective in labor conflicts. While other approaches are being attempted—such as the cross-border organizing activities of several U.S. unions that include the Communications Workers of America, UNITE, and the United Electrical Workers—the world council model appears to be one hopeful approach that was built successfully on existing trade union structures.

Whether additional national unions or international trade secretariats will expand on this approach or others is still in question. But, as the UPS case suggests, at least some elements within the international labor movement are overcoming bureaucratic and institutional inertia and countering the threats to their very existence posed by global corporations. ■

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